

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 343

By Sontany

A RESOLUTION to honor and commemorate Memorial Day in
Tennessee, May 30, 2005.

WHEREAS, the spirit of Memorial Day emerged during the Civil War as many soldiers were buried in enemy territory, far from loving families who could care for their graves and repair the ravages of nature; and

WHEREAS, it was this profoundly sad and disturbing sight that moved widows of Confederate soldiers in Columbus, Mississippi, to place flowers on the graves of their husbands and their husbands' former enemies on April 25, 1866. Their compassion was to help lay the foundation of Memorial Day; and

WHEREAS, one hundred years later, in 1966, President Lyndon Johnson and Congress gave the ultimate distinction to Waterloo, New York, which had conducted a formal and community-wide ceremony on May 5, 1866, that closed businesses across town and honored local soldiers and sailors who had fallen during the Civil War. On May 5, 1868, three years after the Civil War ended, Major General John A. Logan, commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former Union soldiers and sailors, proclaimed May 30th "Decoration Day" by issuing an order for his posts to decorate graves "with the choicest flowers of springtime"; and

WHEREAS, he also urged that, "We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance -- let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of a free and undivided republic." He wanted American citizens to remember the dead of the Civil War, and the painful glory of their deaths. General

Logan only did by proclamation what men and women on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line had been doing on their own; and

WHEREAS, before the war ended, survivors had begun burying their dead and honoring them each spring by laying roses, tulips, and other flowers on their freshly turned graves; and

WHEREAS, moved by compassion and kindness, they felt the need to remember, to give honor, and express gratitude; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, Congress expanded the Memorial Day tradition to include all that had died in service to the nation, and the last Monday in May was officially designated as Memorial Day, the day of remembrance we know today; and

WHEREAS, even though there is sadness in remembering the dead of our nation's wars, Memorial Day is a celebration of hope that the ideals of peace, freedom, and prosperity will shine forever bright in the life of our nation...and the lives of her individual people; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby respectfully honor the memory of all the sons and daughters of this great nation who gave their lives in service to their country so that we may enjoy the many bounties of democracy and the American way of life and urge every Tennessean to join with us in the observance of May 30, 2005 as Memorial Day in Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.